

# Web Design Best Practices & Digital Tactics

## Introduction:

It's a phrase we've all heard before, "you never get a second chance to make a good first impression" and that mindset certainly applies when it comes to your website. More than ever your potential customers have many choices and a positive consideration of your business is crucial from the outset. It takes only 1/10th of a second to form a first impression about a person, and websites are no different. It takes about 50 milliseconds (that's 0.05 seconds) for users to form an opinion about your website that determines whether they like your site or not, whether they'll stay or leave.

This number comes from specific studies. In the first study, participants twice rated the visual appeal of web homepages presented for 500 ms each. In a follow-up study they reduced the exposure time to 50 ms. Throughout, visual appeal ratings were highly correlated from one phase to the next as were the correlations between the 50 ms and 500 ms conditions. Thus, visual appeal can be assessed within 50 ms, suggesting that web designers have about 50 ms to make a good first impression.

People form their opinion about your site in milliseconds. The first second on your website might matter more than all other seconds that follow. Make sure that second makes a great first impression. (1)

## Key Website Guidelines:

- **Keep the Design Simple, Fresh and Unique** - Your website reflects your brand. It is the first impression a visitor will form when they visit your site for the first time. If you use an off-the-shelf template and your website looks like thousands of other sites on the Internet, you'll miss an opportunity to create a unique impression. Why would a potential customer remember your site when s/he has seen dozens of other sites that look just like your site. As you consider your site design, be sure you have a professional logo design. A logo created from clip-art or a template won't be unique and will create a poor impression. Even worse, it may expose you to substantial legal risk. Some business owners invest in a new website design but forget to create an original logo (or to update their old clip-art based logo). (4)
- **Showcase your products and services** - Don't overload your site with photos or graphics. Although it's been said that a picture can say a thousand words, pictures can also confuse and diffuse attention. Pick a few good product shots and/or services and feature those products on the homepage. You can feature your other products on interior pages.
- **Pay Attention To Site Load Times** - People are impatient when browsing websites and slow load times impact conversions (getting people to buy your products or services). If your site design is graphically intense, you need to make sure you'll have the hardware infrastructure and bandwidth to support the designs. This is especially critical if you're serving a large customer base and expect substantial traffic to your site.

- **Make your site easily accessible** - Keep the web design and navigation consistent throughout the site. Don't create unrelated designs for different pages on your site. All the pages should have a similar overall layout and design. Also consider how people with slower internet connections will view your site.
- **Organize your site to provide a better user experience** - Search engines prefer websites that are properly organized. People also prefer good organization. Keep in mind that when your prospective customers visit your site, they're typically looking for specific information. They're rarely going to read entire pages – they'll skim headlines and small portions of text and look at photos or graphics (but not all of them on the same page). A properly structured site that presents information in an orderly and organized way will be much more successful than one that appears chaotic.
- **Content is important** - Keep the content fresh and current. If your website has content dated from 2013, your visitors may quickly leave your site. Poor content can quickly cause a visitor to leave your site. Don't ignore headlines – they can be very powerful and can mean the difference between a visitor reading the rest of the content and leaving your site. Study your successful competitors – especially those that have been in business longer than you. Look at their websites and study how they present their products and services to their customers and potential customers. Study their site colors, voice, use of graphics, illustrations and photos, and the overall site organization.
- **Domain Name** - Your domain will communicate important information to your visitors. It might tell them what your business does. Or it might simply be an effective way for people to easily reach your site. If you're unable to find a URL that matches your business name, you can consider changing the name or finding an alternative URL that includes the name – or one that complements the name.
- **Use a responsive design** - The user experience should correlate with whatever screen size, platform or orientation your site visitor is using. Important things to keep in mind here are a mix of flexible grids, layouts, images and intelligent use of CSS media queries. (2)

### **Web Design Standards and Best Practices:**

- **Logo in the top Left** – Ensure it is on every page on your site and the logo is clickable (about us page a good idea)
- **Contact Info. In Top Right** – A good idea to put it in the top right corner of every page.
- **Main Navigation Across the Top** – Locate in the header at the top of every page (horizontal)

- **Value Proposition High up on the Home Page** – Explain your value to visitors to your site. Why would they want to do business with you? Good form is to put the value proposition above the fold (don't make site visitors scroll down to find it).
- **Call to Action High Up on the Home Page** - Clearly specify and make it easy for site visitors to do what it is you most want them to do. That could be to contact you via email or phone, sign up for a newsletter or follow you on social media.
- **Search Functionality** – Include the ability for site visitors to search for what it is they're looking for on every page.
- **Footer** – Another good place to feature a call to action. An example could be to sign up for email updates.
- **Social Media Icons in the Footer** – If you're present on Social Media, include what channels you're active on using social media icons in the footer.
- **Brand Standards** – Colors, type and tone are specific to every business. You should have a style guide for your website and stick to it. (3)

### **Other Considerations:**

- **Your Photo** - Patients may not have a complete understanding of what your certifications mean, but they are very likely to have feelings about you based on your photo. Make sure you look both competent and warm. Consider using other photos besides just headshots, too. Pictures of physicians and staff interacting can help prospective patients imagine themselves having a positive experience in your office.
- **Essential Information** - Patients want to know whether you're accepting new patients, what kind of insurance you accept, and what kinds of health issues your practice works with. Your front desk staff would rather they didn't have to answer those questions. Have the information readily available, not hidden on a FAQ page.
- **Forms** - Speed things up for your patients and your office staff by making forms available online so patients can fill them out ahead of time. Have PDF forms your patients can download and print out or interactive forms they can fill out online and upload. (4)

### **Digital Marketing Tactics:**

- Targeting the Right Audience – Social Media platforms allow for advanced targeting options including “interest targeting” ensure the right audience will see your display ad/or text ad.
- Geo-fencing - Allows marketers to target users on their mobile phones within a 5-10 mile radius of a specific location, and can be used competitively. For example, a hospital could serve ads to people who are waiting at a nearby facility.
- Marketing Automation - Certain marketing tactics, like email appointment reminders and follow up care instructions, are repetitive and can actually see higher levels of engagement if automated.
- Remarketing - Remarketing advertisements can be a great tool to re-engage users who visited a site and dropped off. This digital tactic allows marketers to reach this audience by showing display or social media ads about their practice while they’re on other sites. In fact, remarketing can be a great way to lower the cost-per-acquisition (CPA) of campaigns.
- Track and measure ROI - In order to create successful digital marketing campaigns, marketers need to know what worked and what didn’t in past campaigns, including which content users find engaging and how many people actually become patients. To get this insight, marketers must set goals prior to launching a campaign, as well as track and measure success and ROI after it has run its course. This practice is necessary to successfully engage consumers in a competitive market. Basic Google Analytics is free and will help you understand many metrics about your website including traffic, new and return visitors, source and engagement time. (5)
- SEM (Search Engine Marketing) – Advertise on Google to reach potential patients. Every day, people search Google to find a medical practice in their area. Use Google advertising to increase the chances that these people will find your website at the top of the search engine results page.
- SEO - Search engine optimization for doctors is a methodology of strategies, techniques and tactics used to increase the amount of visitors to your practice website by obtaining a high-ranking placement in the search results page of a search engine. SEO, is the process of affecting the visibility of a website in "organic" results within major search engines. It is incredibly important to have targeted the correct terms and to have used them throughout your website in a way that search engine algorithms find acceptable and useful. Intuitively, it may seem as though simply using words such as doctor, medical practice, and the location would be sufficient. In smaller communities, this may be adequate but in larger urban areas the number of doctors can mean that generic keywords such as these would not help the website rank on the first page of results.

### **Closing Thoughts:**

Your website should be an extension of your office and a reflection of the care you provide. 77% of patients today go online to choose a medical practice. That's why it is important for medical practitioners to have a strategic digital marketing plan. Once you get potential patients to your website, it should be an extension of your office and a reflection of the care you provide — just as welcoming and just as informative. (6)

### **Sources:**

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